

BIRD SURPRISES ARE NUMEROUS

**REDWINGED BLACKBIRDS IN CITY
—WAR AMONG MATES THE
RULE IN COURTSHIP.**

A BATTLE TO THE DEATH

**Chipping Sparrow's Doorstep Friend—
Catbird's Song—Eggs of Rarest
Green—Other Facts and Anec-
dotes of Feathered Kingdom.**

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There are daily surprises in store for every lover of birds. Surprise is the spice of field work. Things are set down in the books as rules, governing life in feathers, and, lo, a walk abroad in the morning will set the books at naught.

It is impossible to put down one thing as an inviolable rule, for the birds will break it before it is dry on the paper.

"Where can I find the red-winged blackbirds nesting?" a Chicago friend asked me recently.

"You can't find them nearer than the stretches of the Skokie swamp north of the city," I answered, "the redwing never comes to town."

An hour later I found a pair of redwings were constructing their nest in the rushes under the shadow of a Marconi wireless telegraph station. City streets hemmed in the site, hundreds of people were passing constantly, and yet Capt. Blackbird, with his orange and gold epaulets shining on his shoulders and making him a fair mark for the stones of every idle boy, hovered over the heads of intruders and called his "conker-ee" as blithely as though he were above the isolated swamp of the countryside.

There is an interesting family today in the nest hidden in the rushes of that wet town lot. Some boy did find the father blackbird a shining mark, and the devoted creature is now helping his mate fill the mouths of the hungry family, while one of his legs, broken by a stone from a shotgun, hangs dangling.

Bird life is full of tragedy. In the old nursery rhyme children are taught to believe that the "little birds in their nests are not" and "are out of the nest as well." The familiar ditty was written for its moral effect, and it is true enough to stand solely for the good it may do, but it must be recorded, reluctantly enough by the way that birds sometimes show what Engelsmen call a "martyr temper."

Love and war always come together with the birds and as the old saying makes all things fair in those two contingencies, possibly we cannot blame the songsters for "rowing" through the whole courtship season. The male birds do the fighting, while the charmer over whom they have waxed pugnacious looks on with apparent unconcern as to the outcome, and weds the victor instantaneously.

R. W. Hegner, while tramping afield recently on bird photography intent

Stricken as was the kingfisher, his anger survived the stroke of his adversary, and in a picture taken of him after the battle he still showed an raised crest and bristling feathers the passion in his heart.

It is feared that the royal race of kingfishers is doomed to extinction. Man in the utter selfishness of his nature begrudges the bird the few fish which it catches for the appeasement of its appetite, and man frequently shoots it on sight. If the same rule were to be applied to every fish-loving man, woman and child it would take but a few Fridays to depopulate the earth.

It may be set down fairly that the men most anxious for the death of the fish-loving birds are the men who drag seines and dynamite streams

domestic relations. Dr. Ryder is faced with a mate of *P. longirostris* from across some patches of dense jungle when he finds the bird has lost his wing.

The chipping sparrow, *Zenaidura*, is still here at last. His low, hoarse warble, with his habit gives the name to some sections of the country the names of his bird. These are recognizable on own observation—a series of chirps, warbles, etc., which have yet to see one which we are familiar with the imitation note, but it should be declared that this never varies in its choice of language material some parent or other would be sure to stamp across it exception to weaken the rule. Once upon a time there were such

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